

## [Thank God for Columbus]

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### THANK GOD FOR COLUMBUS

“... restores faith to the flophouse, workhouse, warehouse, whorehouse, bughouse life of man ...

(A shy little man wearing a droopy black suit, the sleeves and trouser legs of which are too long for the little arms and legs. The black eyes are round and clear, although the faintest reflection of pain brings out the veins, [??] and he shudders at even the suggestion of cruelty and violence, yet he radiates a quiet faith in himself and a natural pride and courtesy. He was caught serenading the cashier behind the cafeteria counter with a rendition of the song: My love Is Like An Evening Prayer. His voice is big and resonant.)

[?] FROM THE COLLECTIONS OF THE MANUSCRIPT DIVISION LIBRARY OF [?] In 6/5/39 400 words D A [?] FOLKLORE \*\*\*\* NEW YORK [?] Forms to be Filled out for Each Interview FORM A Circumstances of Interview STATE NAME OF WORKER Herman Partnow ADDRESS 557 West 144 Street DATE June 5, 1939 SUBJECT Fringe folklore Thank God For Columbus 1. Date and time of interview [??] May 25, 1939

2. Place of interview

Foot [?] of Canal Street bridge

3. Name and address of informant

Sam Rosen

4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant.

5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you

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6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc.

A wide waste area at the foot of the Manhattan Bridge where the unemployed [?] sunning. Third Avenue L, second-hand clothes shops, heavy traffic.

FOLKLORE

NEW YORK

FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

STATE

NAME OF WORKER Herman Partnow

ADDRESS 557 West 144 Street

DATE June 5, 1939

SUBJECT THANK GOD FOR COLUMBUS

THANK GOD FOR COLUMBUS

Yes, it's a wonderful voice. And /it ain't no expense neither. A little eggnogg , some ]?]  
Heide's pastilles and it comes out clear like a canary. That's my nickname in the sewer -  
Sam, the Canary. ]?] rough Rough [?] laborers, they ain't artistic and sensitive like girls,  
but they [?] call me the canary , they gotta, , on account of my voice. I don't mean [my?]  
voice. I hate to say I, my. It's a [?] [??????] [?] born voice, that's all. It happens by accident  
it's mine. [??], it's It's a pleasure. It's an inspiration, it gives me a good appetite, it makes  
me happy. [?] Except at night , I eat two cups of coffee and supper, I feel so heavy it gets  
screechy. I'm too tired, [?] it effects the voice, you understand. The slightest thing makes  
it screechy [??]. I didn't know till three, four years ago I even had it. Nobody told me. My

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wife [?] never told me. She tried to kill [?] it , even. She was a nervous woman, irritable - a born naggard. She put me on a pedestal and made an idol out of me, then she knocked me off. I got annulled. [?] I went to work in the sewers for WPA. It was [?] an accident -/ one day I was shovelling [?] and I began to sing. The boys [?] hollered for an encore. I was surprised. It was an inspiration , [???], it put life into them. Since [?] that time everybody calls me Bing Crosby, Junior, because I'm an amature. [??] Your whole life you go around, nobody [?] tells you, nobody is decent enough, now [?] [?] Bing Junior. [????]

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My uncle had a baby he [?] named him Dennis. So what? The kids on the block call him Ziggy. Foolishness. My name is Sam Rosen, plain, I don't care who asks, June 6th I'm singing in A Low's Theater Amature Hour, [???] shall I go and change my name. I'm a city-wide amature. 501 Madison Avenue, that's WNEW there, downstairs is a confectionery, they gave me an audition, they give me auditions all over, [????]. I sing in one room, they listen in another room [?] [?????] over the microphone, the receiver, the amplifier, whatever you call it. Then when I'm through, I hear them say: "Thank you." It's an inspiration , [??] the way they say it , "Thank you." Most of the time they [?] ask [?] /for an encore, , too. It's an exhilaration you get a better appetite, you don't feel like an appendage. Today it's so busy by slack everybody is demoralized. They don't know where to look. If a person looks up at the sky and somebody whispers he's a Messiah, they follow him. They don't know no better, they're looking for an inspirations . Like on Forty Second Street, let one person only look up, everybody is looking.

My inspiration, I need to serenade a girl. When I hear the call of nature, to satisfy my cravings, follow my sex nature, I need a mate. But I can't locate her. I got a good nature, I'm quiet, not like other laborers but since I'm annulled I can't locate [?] my ideal. [ I'm looking for a lady with a brother or a father they're in business and they'll allow me to work for them.\*1] I'm going to a matrimonial bureau. A friend of mine, I know him a long time.

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He's opening a new office now on 42nd Street, he's sending me a post card, he expects to get the American type, education.

\*1 3 [?] I'm not satisfied with the girls he got now. They're fat or they're widows or they got children. [?] [??] only girl, she was slim, with a good skin, three inches taller than me, we clicked right away. But when we got through talking in the office there, I asked her [?] telephone number, she said: "Get a steady job, I'll keep company." That ain't my ideal. Go get a steady job. At what? Fixing fountain pens?

The only thing I got to depend on is the voice. The sewer work is only ten eleven days a month so the rest of the time I go [?] to school. I take up French, acting, I learn dancing, classical dancing, even fencing. For poise, you understand. Like a real/ opera singer, only it don't cost me a penny. It's [?] WPA culture courses. It's a pleasure, an inspiration. Thank God for Columbus.